Sustainability Work Group Convening
SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING TOOL

This tool was created for States in the Reform Support Network's Sustainability Working Group. It is intended as a guide – not a template – for States in creating a plan for sustaining a given priority reform. States should incorporate the outputs of this tool into existing plans as possible.

The Sustainability Planning Tool should be used in conjunction with the Sustainability Rubric. First, identify a priority reform that you want to sustain. A priority reform is defined as a body of work that an SEA is undertaking in order to achieve one or more of its priority goals. The rubric elements are reform-neutral; they can be used to help you build broad understanding and support for multiple reforms, from professional development (New York) to the successful integration of higher standards, aligned tests, and aligned teacher evaluation and support systems (a few states). Next, apply the Sustainability Rubric to that priority reform to self-assess the sustainability of that reform. Based on the results of the self-assessment, identify areas of focus – those areas in the rubric that you would like to strengthen. With these pieces in place, you can use this planning tool to create plans for improving those areas of focus for your priority reform.

The Reform Support Network has identified three key areas of focus that are common to the States in the Sustainability Working Group. These were identified based on the data from the self-assessment that States completed using the Sustainability Rubric. Based on those results, the RSN Facilitators identified common areas of challenge and areas of mixed strength and challenge, then prioritized those areas of the rubric that have the greatest potential for impact. The work of the Working Group will center on these three key areas of focus. Each of the Working Group States should include these focus areas in their plans, but may also add their own areas of focus. These three key areas are:

- **Building system capacity:** This area of focus centers on various elements of Part 1 of the Sustainability rubric, with an emphasis on shifting the capabilities, mindsets, and practices of people inside and outside the SEA to support priority reforms (1Aii, 1Bi, 1Bii).
    - Outcome for September 2014: States have defined and built the capacity needed, both inside and outside the agency, to sustain their priority reforms.
    - Sample products:
        - Tools for defining the capacity needed to sustainably support a priority reform and to identify the key actors inside and outside the SEA who will need that capacity (e.g., expertise in coaching for those who plan and deliver professional development, communication and stakeholder engagement around college and career ready standards)
        - Professional learning modules for building this capacity for people inside and outside the SEA
        - Protocols for individual and group reflection on practice, with lessons learned for embedding them in the system's culture

- **Assessing progress and engaging/communicating with stakeholders about progress:** This area of focus will address challenges across several sections of the Sustainability Rubric, including 2Ciii, 2Dii, and 3Bi. Participants will discuss opportunities for collecting feedback from the field on the quality and efficacy of implementation, communicating results and engaging stakeholders in discussion of results, and using data to build stakeholder support for reforms.
    - Outcome for September 2014: States have established meaningful internal and external performance dialogues about the progress of their priority reforms; these dialogues drive continued progress in implementation and build stakeholder support for the reforms.
    - Sample products:
        - Identification of the most important data elements and evidence for systemically understanding interim progress on priority reforms (e.g., CCSS-aligned shifts in educator practice, rigor of observation feedback, rater certification results)

  - Protocols for preparing and running internal performance management dialogues to drive progress on priority reforms
  - "Look-fors" and issues to watch for in these dialogues that are specific to each of the priority reforms, with suggested solutions for anticipating and/or addressing them (e.g., principal discretion in TLE systems leads to no differentiation in performance amongst teachers)
  - Tools for messaging to and engaging with key stakeholders around these performance issues, including protocols for "external" performance dialogues to capture stakeholder feedback about the current state of progress

- **Using policy and budgeting to sustain the reforms:** Based on challenges associated with sections 2Bi and 3Ai of the Sustainability Rubric, this area of focus will concentrate on how to align State policy and budgets to reflect the State's top priority reform(s). Participants will consider how to align their resources – people, time, technology, and money – to the priority goals and reforms. They will also discuss State policy changes and how to ensure that policies support rather than inhibit the success of the reforms.
  - Outcome for September 2014: States have put in place policies and funding mechanisms that sustain each of their priority reforms.
  - Sample products:
    - Tools and exercises for identifying policy and budgetary supports for a given priority reform (e.g., how no-cost extension will fit with local state statutes, competitive grants, and use of Title II dollars to sustain teacher/leader effectiveness systems)
    - Identification of best practices for using flexibility in Federal funds to support priority reforms
    - Sample policies for supporting reforms

The areas of focus will be opportunities for members of the State teams in the Work Group to participate in more focused conversation and sharing with members of other state teams throughout the course of the Work Group. This may include additional focus area-specific meetings, webinars, or conference calls with focused conversation and sharing or additional technical assistance.

There are eight key sections of the planning tool. For each, an optional template and directions are provided. States in the Working Group should also feel free to draw upon the provided RSN Facilitator for assistance in completing the tool. The parts of the tool are as follows:

I. **Priority reform and areas of focus:** In this section, identify the priority reform you are making sustainable and the areas of focus you are planning to address
II. **Establishing desired outcomes and objectives:** In this section, describe the successful outcomes you hope the plan will achieve one year from now and the objectives at key points in time along the way
III. **Identifying key stakeholders**: In this section, consider the people – either general audiences or specific stakeholders – who will need to be involved in order for you to achieve your intended objectives and outcomes, and map them according to their levels of support and influence [Prioritize this section if you have identified "Assessing progress and engaging/communicating with stakeholders about progress" as an area of focus]
IV. **Identifying policy and budgeting opportunities to support sustainability activities:** In this section, identify the activities that will need to be sustained in your priority reform and the policy and budget changes that will need to happen in order to sustain them [Prioritize this section if you have identified "Using policy and budgeting to sustain the reforms" as an area of focus]
V. **Identifying key strategies:** In this section, identify the key steps you will take to improve sustainability and make it clear which of the areas of focus that strategy aims to address
VI. **Defining strategies:** In this section, articulate each strategy in more detail
VII. **Tracking progress:** In this section, describe how you will track the progress of your plan as it is implemented
VIII. **Committing to immediate next steps:** In this section, identify the immediate next steps that are required to put your plan into action, plus who will be responsible for each next step and when each will be completed

I. Priority reform and areas of focus

- *What is the priority reform that you are planning to sustain?*

- *Which of the shared areas of focus will your State address? (Check all that apply)*
  - □ *Creating a statewide culture of continuous improvement / Building State Capacity (1Aii)*
  - □ *Assessing progress and engaging/communicating with stakeholders about progress (2Cii, 2Diii, 3Bi)*
  - □ *Using policy and budgeting to sustain the reforms (2Bi, 3Ai)*
  - □ *Integrating priority reforms*

- *Are there additional areas that your State needs to focus on strengthening, according to your self-assessment using the Sustainability Rubric? Identify as many as necessary. Also be sure to add them to the where "Other" is indicated in the templates below.*

II. Establishing desired outcomes and objectives

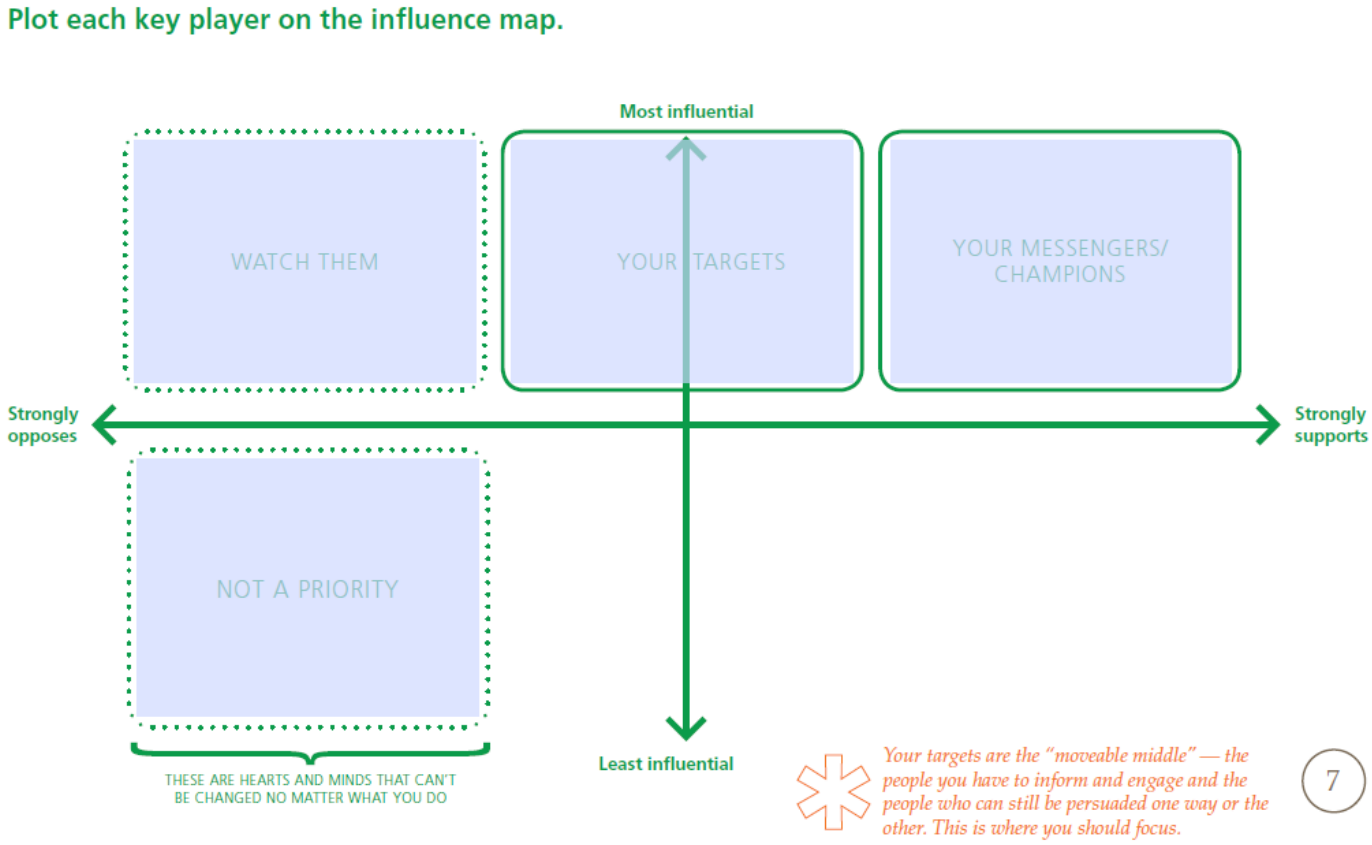
Use the template below to identify desired outcomes and objectives for this work.
Start with the long-term outcomes in mind: What would success look like one year from now in each of your areas of focus? How will you know that you've improved the sustainability of your priority reform (consider evidence in the rubric)? Note that these should be outcomes that indicate the reform is sustainable – not necessarily outcomes of the reform itself. Use these to fill in the "1 year outcomes" column on the chart below.
Then identify shorter-term outputs: In order to meet your 1-year outcomes, what products will you produce along the way? Fill in the rest of the chart with objectives at the appropriate time scale. The time scales provided are suggestions, but adapt the chart to meet the needs of your work.

	Outputs					**Outcomes**
Area of focus	**30 days**	**60 days**	**90 days**	**6 months**	**9 months**	**1 year outcomes**
Building system capacity (1Aii, 1Bi, 1Bii)						
Assessing progress and engaging/ communicating with stakeholders about progress (2Ciii, 2Diii, 3Bi)						

	Outputs					**Outcomes**
Area of focus	**30 days**	**60 days**	**90 days**	**6 months**	**9 months**	**1 year outcomes**
Using policy and budgeting to sustain the reforms (2Bi, 3Ai)						
Integrating priority reforms						
Other *[add as many rows as necessary]*						

III. Identifying key stakeholders

Note: While this section is important for all plans, ***you should especially complete it if you have identified "Assessing progress and engaging/communicating with stakeholders about progress" as an area of focus****. Based on the needs you identified in the Sustainability Rubric self-assessment and the areas of focus identified above, who are the key stakeholders you will need to reach in order to achieve your objectives and desired outcome? Consider general audiences as well as specific stakeholders both inside and outside of your agency. Identify the stakeholder groups and plot each on the map below.*



Excerpted from a longer workbook, prepared by KSA-Plus Communications and adapted from a tool created for the CCSSO and PIE-Net.

IV. Identifying policy and budgeting opportunities to support sustainability activities

Note: While this section is important for all plans, ***you should especially complete it if you have identified "Using policy and budgeting to sustain the reforms" as an area of focus****. Begin by identifying the activities that will need to be supported in order to strengthen your areas of focus and sustain your priority reform. Note that these activities will not necessarily be the same as they were under the RTT grant, or could be similar activities that are changed in some way. For example, under RTT an activity may be to provide data coaches to every school, while in the longer term, you may change that activity to only provide data coaches at the district level with each responsible for several schools. The funds needed would then of course be different than funds currently needed, but you would still need to identify where those funds would come from. Consider potential changes as you consider the policy and budgeting changes necessary to sustain those activities.*

For policy:

Specific activities that need support	Description	Policies to Aid Sustainability			TA and Support to Aid Sustainability			Notes (takeaways, next steps)
		State statute[1]	ESEA flex waiver	[custom]	RSN	[custom]	[custom]	

[1] Please note that we recognize that state statutes can impact federal funding rules, like supplement not supplant, but may be necessary to consider when thinking about sustained avenues of funding.

For funding:

Specific activities that need support	Annual funding needed for activity	Identify potential Federal funding sources (e.g., Title I, Title II, etc.	Who in the agency is responsible for these funds?	What conditions would need to change to use funds for this activity?	What processes does an LEA use to access these funds?	Notes (takeaways, next steps)

V. Identifying key strategies

Based on the needs you identified in the Sustainability Rubric self-assessment and the areas of focus identified above, consider the strategies you will undertake to address those needs and achieve your objectives and desired outcomes in each area of focus. These should be the discrete pieces of work you will undertake to strengthen the sustainability of a given reform. Be sure that each of the key stakeholders identified above will be touched by these strategies. Prioritize the top strategies and indicate which area of focus they will support, by marking an X in the related box.

Areas of focus	**Strategy 1:**	**Strategy 2:**	**Strategy 3:**	**Strategy 4:**	**Strategy 5:**
Building system capacity (1Aii, 1Bi, 1Bii)					
Assessing progress and engaging/communicating with stakeholders about progress (2Ciii, 2Diii, 3Bi)					
Using policy and budgeting to sustain the reforms (2Bi, 3Ai)					
Integrating priority reforms					
Other *[add as many rows as necessary]*					

VI. Defining strategies

Once you have identified what your priority strategies are, it is important to clearly articulate the details of each strategy. For each strategy identified above, complete the strategy profile (below) to outline it in additional detail. Create copies to accommodate as many strategies as you have identified.

Strategy name	*Strategy 1*
Strategy owner	*Who is ultimately responsible for the success of this strategy?*
Strategy description	*Describe the strategy in enough detail so that someone unfamiliar with your work could understand what you intend to do.*
Connection to outcomes	*How and why will this strategy help us to improve sustainability and achieve our identified outcomes?*
Definition of success	*If this strategy is wildly successful, what will be the result? (Link to one or more outcomes if appropriate, but feel free to define success more specifically for this strategy alone)*
Leading indicators	*How will you measure progress on this strategy along the way? What indicators will you use?*
Milestones	*What are the 3-5 most important process steps that must be achieved along the way? By when will each happen?*
Resources used	*What resources are necessary for the success of this strategy? From where will they come? Be as specific as possible.*
Products made	*What outputs or other deliverables will be produced as a result of this strategy that will be helpful to others in your agency or teams in other states? (E.g., tools, templates, artifacts, guidance documents, etc.)*

Potential risks	**Solutions for mitigating risks**
What are the potential risks associated with this strategy?	*What will you do to mitigate or address those risks?*

VII. Tracking progress

With a clear plan in place, consider how you will track progress on implementation of your strategies and on increasing sustainability of your priority reform. Specifically answer the following questions.

- How often will you check in on progress?
- Who will be involved in progress tracking? How will you engage each strategy lead? How will you engage your chief?
- What will you measure to determine progress?

VIII. Committing to immediate next steps

Based on the objectives, outcomes, and strategies identified and the plan for tracking progress, what are your immediate next steps in beginning to implement your sustainability plan? Who will take the lead on each? By when should they be completed? Consider returning to this template on a regular basis (i.e., biweekly or monthly) to refresh your team's next steps based on the plan.

Next step	Who?	By when?